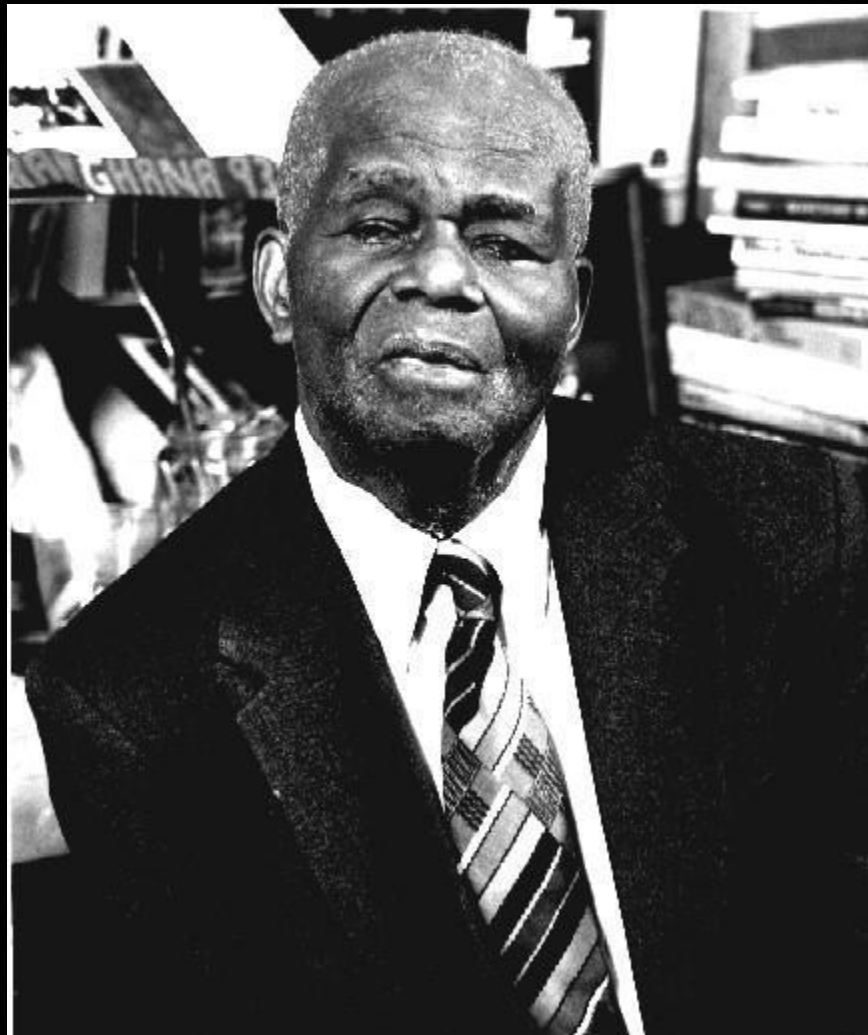


John Henrik Clarke: the Harlem connection to the founding of Africana Studies

From: Afro-Americans in New York Life and History

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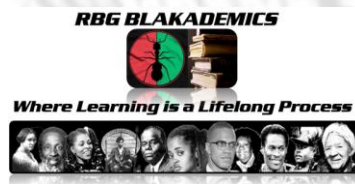


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John Henrik Clarke was the Presiding Elder of the Africana Studies discipline for three decades (from 1968 until his death in 1998). His 1969 election by popular acclamation as the first president of the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA), an organization he founded and led, symbolizes the widespread acceptance of his leadership. No less significant was his appointment to the faculty of the Black and Puerto Rican Studies Department at Hunter College, again by popular demand. Another indication of the recognition of his peerless championship was the naming of the library of the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University, the John Henrik Clarke Library. He also taught at the Center in the "early founding years" of that program. (1)

Professor Clarke's disciples and students (both formal and informal) include many who were with him when he led a group of younger scholars and students in a confrontation with the leadership of the African Studies Association (ASA) and the eventual secession from the organization leading to the formation of AHSA. (2)

His early followers included Dr. Leonard Jeffries, Cheke Unwache, Shelby Smith, and James Turner who appropriately summarized the significance of Dr. Clarke's role in the founding of AHSA as "that organization which positioned him at the center of the evolution of the Black Studies Movement." (3) Turner continued, "Professor Clarke is unquestionably one of the principle intellectual and academic mentors in Africana Studies." (4)

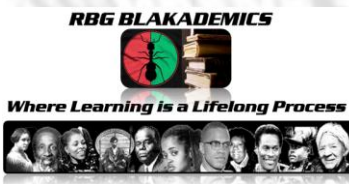
Professor Clarke's leadership was also widely acknowledged by the critics of the discipline. Henry Louis Gates identified him as the "great paterfamilias of the Afrocentric movement." (5) Harold Cruise, another critic, asserted:

Clarke is an Africanist of longstanding, one of the few devoted American Negro specialists in African history outside university cloisters. This distinction ... has earned him the title of a recognized prophet of African and Afro-American redemption. (6)

In view of the significant intellectual role played by Professor Clarke, one remarkable fact stands out: the savant was what Dr. Earl E. Thorpe called a historian "without portfolio." (7) In other words, at the time John Henrik Clarke was elevated to the exalted position of Presiding Elder of Africana Studies, he had been "self-educated," and in terms of formal education, he had "barely finished grammar school." (8)

"Self-educated" scholars are a vital part of the tradition among intellectuals of African descent living in the United States. The recorded works of the leaders, in providing instruction for the African descent population, go back to the latter years of the eighteenth century. These works include those of Richard Allen, Prince Hall, and Absalom Jones. (9) The nineteenth-century intellectuals kept the tradition going, and they included David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, Alexander Crummell, and Martin Delany. (10) The tradition of self-educated scholars resumed after the Civil War. Led by John E. Bruce and Arthur Schomburg, who were joined by others, they advanced the African history project in the 1920s during the period called the "Harlem





Renaissance," which ran parallel to the peak of the Garvey movement. John Clarke arrived in New York a few years after the decline of those great movements.

A vital part of this tradition was intergenerational mentoring. The African Lodge has been a mentoring institution from the time of its founding in 1787 to the present. Most of the nineteenth-century leaders belonged to the "Prince Hall Masons." (11) Another indication of the direct and indirect mentoring process is found in the works of the various self-educated scholars. David Walker praised the teachings of his elder, Reverend Richard Allen. (12) Maria Stewart and Henry Highland Garnet in turn evoked the example of David Walker. (13) The mentoring chain can be found in the reflections of Arthur Schomburg who was inspired by John Bruce and Alexander Crummell. (14) John Henrik Clarke was in turn mentored by Schomburg. (15)

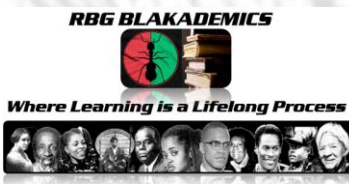
This paper is an attempt to shed light on the significance of the self-educated scholars of African descent on the emergence of Africana Studies. (16) The Africana Studies project emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century as the demand for the development of African history by self-trained as well as university-trained scholars of African descent intensified. The self-educated scholars as a rule seemed to be less restrained by the protocols of formal academia than were the university-trained scholars. In a substantial sense, however, all scholars of African descent had to obtain their knowledge about Africa's role in world history through self-education.

The focus on aspects of the life and works of John Henrik Clarke provides an opportunity to examine a case study of the development of perhaps one of the last of the self-educated intellectuals of African descent. The paper also provides insight into the intellectual foundations of the discipline of Africana Studies. Another emphasis of the paper is the pattern of linkages between the self-educated intellectuals and their university-educated counterparts. A basic assumption of this attempt is that there is a genetic relationship between the proto-Pan African beginnings of African Centered education over two hundred years ago and the Africana project.

The basic materials used in this presentation are the works of Professor Clarke. He was not only a prolific writer, dynamic lecturer, and informative informal conversationalist; he often provided his readers and audiences with autobiographical sketches of his intellectual development. Three of the latter are heavily relied on in this essay. (17) The basic outline of these sketches is quite consistent from text to text. A somewhat unexpected significance of the construction of his autobiography will be explored below.

After a brief note on Harlem in the 1930s, the paper follows Dr. Clarke's intellectual development according to the periodization scheme he used in his autobiographical reflections: 1) his arrival in New York in 1933 until his induction into the U.S. Army in 1941, a period I term "educational foundations"; 2) his discharge from the U.S. Army in 1945 until 1958 when he returned from his first trip to Africa, the period I refer to as "the calling"; 3) the development of his model curriculum from 1958 to 1969 and the founding of the African Heritage Studies Association, a period I term "the curriculum of John Henrik Clarke." The last section includes a reflection on the significance of Dr. Clarke's ideas on the African Centered curriculum project, which emerged from the advent of Africana Studies.





HARLEM 1933

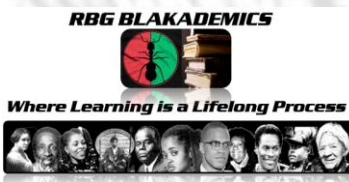
Seventy years ago when John Henrik Clarke (18) arrived in Harlem at the age of eighteen, he found not only a city within "The City," he also found a microcosm of a nation within a nation and indeed a world within the world. Harlem in those years, in some sense, held the position that the metonym Ethiopia had occupied a century earlier. The personality of the inner city was being forged by the assembly of African humanity gathered from all over the United States, the Caribbean, and the African Continent. A host of overlapping organizations and movements were competing for the attention and loyalty of these masses of black folk. Among those most relevant to the shaping of the black boy from the Deep South, with little formal education, were the various socialist organizations including the Communist Party and its affiliates; the memory of the Harlem Renaissance reflected in the continuing work of several of its leading personalities; the emerging human, direct action civil rights movement with its protest programs; the Garvey movement revival, promoted by various splinter groups; and most importantly the African historiography tradition, advocated for the most part by several outstanding self-educated historians. The various agendas, programs, projects, and proposals were frequently promoted by street orators speaking at strategic intersections from stepladders. In such a way the would-be leaders and the pedestrian masses interacted intimately in such a way that professional intellectuals rarely experienced. Each of those forces had a hand in orientating the new arrival into the community and each contributed to his educational foundation. Such was John Henrik Clarke's initiation into the Harlem community.

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS 1933-1941

John Clarke was not totally tabula rasi when he and his companion got off the freight train in New Jersey and headed for New York. (19) He had been taught something of his paternal African ancestry by a great grandmother. Although he had not finished high school he had learned to read and was an avid reader. He had been a Sunday school teacher, and in the context of Bible studies, the young Clarke had wondered why none of the characters in the Bible were black, not even the biblical Ethiopians. (20) His curiosity had also been raised when a white employer told him that black people had no history. (21) An essay in a book, which he incidentally came across, had sparked his interest in history further. The essay was "The Negro Digs up his Past" by Arthur Schomburg, which had been published in *The New Negro* edited by Alain Locke. (22)

Besides a desire to leave the poverty and oppressive climate of the Deep South's white supremacy regime, the young Clarke seemed to have no specific expectations related to his northern journey in the summer of 1933. In fact, according to some of his accounts, New York was not his original destination. According to one version, he started out to go to Chicago, attracted by the Chicago Centennial World's Fair of 1933. (23) Evidently the official Chicago reception to the freight train "passengers" was not too friendly. The wandering duo thus headed for New York. (24) John Clarke therefore was ready for his Harlem education. The early phase of his Harlem education was what could be considered a practicum. The first individual who warmly welcomed him was a Marxist who offered hospitality services by finding lodging for the two friends. Evidently he pointed Clarke to meager employment and immediately began to indoctrinate young John into the Communist agenda. He joined the Young Communist League





and began participating in street corner oratory and communist protest campaigns. (25) During this period Clarke also began to explore the complex sociopolitical environment of Harlem--the contending forces that operated largely outside the formal political process. Very soon thereafter he was swept into the revived Garvey movement, which brought him somewhat into conflict with his socialist affiliations. The revived Garvey movement had its roots in the decade of the twenties when Marcus Mosiah Garvey lead the largest mass movement among African peoples in modern history up to that point. The movement was on the one hand an inspirer of the "Harlem Renaissance" and its antagonist on the other hand. Clarke's association with the various tendencies aroused his interests in political change, literary production, and historical scholarship.

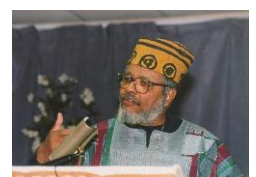
Clarke's intellectual development began in the spring of 1934 when he met two of his three "greatest teachers," Arthur Schomburg and Willis N. Huggins. He named Leo Hansberry as the third. Clarke often reflected on the men who he considered "the greatest influence on his career:" Arthur A. Schomburg "taught me how to understand the interrelationship of African history to world history." The role of Huggins invariably followed Schomburg's. Huggins "taught me how to understand the political meaning of history." (26) Although Hansberry was named as one of Clarke's three Master Teachers, his influence came later and through the filter of public lectures and writings. Professor Clarke's relationship with Schomburg and Huggins was more personal and intense. The association with Schomburg from 1934 until Schomburg's death in 1938 seems to have been more influential in directing John Clarke to a lifelong commitment. At least this was Clarke's assessment as he reflected on his life more than fifty years later. As related above, he first encountered Schomburg in the essay "The Negro Digs Up His Past" which Clarke first read as a youth in Georgia before coming to New York. About that first literary meeting, Clarke reflected:

I did not know what a profound influence Arthur Schomburg had on my life, until I began to look back at how I met him literally, I mean historically, by reading his essay in the book *The New Negro*. The essay was called "The Negro Digs Up His Past." (27)

Evidently that literary meeting inspired him to look up Schomburg in his second year in New York. Clarke often spoke and wrote about that first face-to-face meeting. (28) Upon locating Schomburg at his post in the Harlem Library where he was curator of the Schomburg Collection, which he had sold to the city library, Clarke said in one account:

I told him I wanted to know all the history of the Negroes, all the history of Africa henceforth, right now, within the hour, within your lunch hour. He said: "son, what you're calling Negro history, and African history are the missing pages of world history." (29)

Thus began John Henrik Clarke's first lesson in historiography. It appears that much of the instruction that Clarke received occurred in that great classroom, the streets of Harlem, where Clarke would meet his mentor at the subway and walk with him to the library. In the library itself when Schomburg would observe Clarke reading, the master would direct him to other sources relating to the topic. (30) Besides elaborating on Schomburg's teaching about the relationship





between African history and world history and the omission of the truth about Africa from Eurocentric history, Professor Clarke was quite vague about what specifics he learned from Schomburg and for that matter his other great teachers. (Besides Hansberry he mentioned that J.A. Rogers and Charles C. Seifort were also among his other teachers.) However, what Clarke did learn was so indelibly imprinted on his mind that he remembered years later that he "knew then that I had to build on the foundation that Arthur Schomburg had shown me how to lay." (31) In another reflection, Professor Clarke asserted:

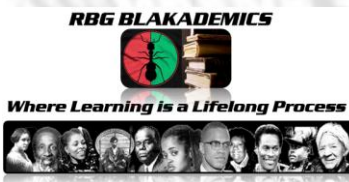
I could not get out of my mind what influence Arthur A. Schomburg had had on my life. He actually assisted me in laying the foundation for my career as a teacher of history as a Pan-Africanist, as a Socialist and as a person who sees no contradiction in being a Socialist, a Pan-Africanist and an African World Nationalist all at one time. (32)

A closer picture of the Schomburg influence emerges by comparing some aspects of Schomburg's life and ideas with Clarke's autobiographical memorial. Such a comparison serves as a foundation for exploring the influence of some of Schomburg's ideas on Clarke's contribution to Pan African history and historiography. The parallels are appropriate because John Henrik Clarke crafted his autobiographical memorial in the 1990s more than a half-century after Schomburg died, with a consciousness of the significance of the life story of the historian to historiography.

Arthur A. Schomburg arrived in New York from his native Puerto Rico in 1891 at the age of 17. (33) Schomburg became heavily involved in Puerto Rican and Cuban revolutionary politics from his arrival in New York until the end of the Spanish-American War. But by 1905 he had come under the influence of John Edward Bruce whose Pan Africanism converted Schomburg into the African historiography project. (34) The association between Bruce and Schomburg led to the creation of the Negro Society for Historical Research in 1911. (35) Schomburg's conversion also led to his vast collection of material by and about Africans. (36) Arthur Schomburg was much more than a bibliophile as much of the popular memory recalls. He was also a leader in the broad Pan African movement promoting unity between continental, Caribbean, and North American Africans. More relevant for this study he was a vital contributor to the foundations of Africana studies. Clarke lamented the fact that "the present-day generation of Africans, African Americans and Puerto Ricans who know about the Collection know very little of Arthur Schomburg and his influence on Africana Studies." (37)

Schomburg's ambition as he stated it was "to awaken the sensibilities, to kindle the dormant fibres in the soul, and to fire the racial patriotism by the study of the Negro books." (38) Such a program would include "the practical history of the Negro Race, from the dawn of civilization to the present time." (39) He insisted that "[h]istory must restore what slavery took away." (40) He emphasized the necessity of "books written by our men and women." (41) He taught that those of African descent must have respect for the thinkers and writers of the past. Their texts should be revised and corrected if necessary. (42) But they must be the foundations upon which to build the history that must be developed in order to liberate African humanity. Schomburg's list of African descent authors included Anthony William Amo who wrote philosophical treatises in eighteenth century Germany. (43) Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein who wrote a dissertation in the





Netherlands in the same century was also included. (44) He placed a special emphasis on texts from various intellectuals who were not only writers but also Africans of action. The list included Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, David Walker, Daniel Coker, John Russwurm, Henry Highland Garnet, Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Edward Wilmot Blyden, and Alexander Crummell among many others. In other words, Schomburg indicated that the materials for an appropriate history for African humanity in the twentieth century were abundant and needed only to be cultivated in order to develop an effective curriculum.

Twenty years before Carter G. Woodson published *The Miseducation of the Negro*, Schomburg anticipated Woodson's argument when he succinctly wrote:

The university graduate is wont to overestimate his ability, fresh from the machinery that endows him with a parchment and crowns him with knowledge, he steps out into the world to meet the practical men with years of experience and mother wit. It is a contrast, the professional man with the veneer of high art, and the acquaintance with the best authors, and up to date histories demanding recognition. All these books take their proper places when applied to the white people, but when applied or measured up to the black people, they lack the substantial and the inspiring. They are like meat without salt, they bear no analogy to our own; and for this reason it would be a wise plan for us to lay down a course of study in Negro History and achievements, before or after men and women have left certain schools. (45)

One other aspect of Schomburg's life needs attention. In order to make a living while he was engaged in this monumental work, Schomburg had to take employment in what may be considered menial jobs. (46) It was relatively late in his life that he got a position related to his true calling. That was when he became curator of the Schomburg Collection at the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library. Such incongruity was accompanied by the disrespect of some university-trained intellectuals who used his collection but did not accord him full recognition because he had no college diplomas. (47) The exclusion was never rigid, however. For example, Schomburg was a member of the advisory board of the *Encyclopedia of the Negro* project. He appeared in a group photograph of the directors and advisors taken in 1936. (48)

Schomburg's interest in history was sparked before he arrived in New York. As a youth, white Puerto Ricans taunted him by alleging that blacks had no history. Schomburg also indicated that a Puerto Rican teacher had inspired him to study history.

These aspects of the life of Schomburg and perhaps others led John Henrik Clarke to state, "The lessons that I learned from him went far beyond 'black history' and 'blackness'." (49) He proclaimed, "Arthur A. Schomburg was the antecedent of the Black Studies Revolution and one of the ideological fathers of this generation." (50) It is interesting that Clarke's appreciation of Schomburg did not come until rather late in his life. He confessed that he could not admit the full impact of Schomburg's teachings "until a generation after his death." (51)

The belated evaluation of Schomburg's influence is germane to Clarke's crafting of his own life story. Whether coincidentally or by design, John Henrik Clarke's autobiographical sketches





emphasize aspects of his life that are remarkably parallel to the biography of Arthur Alphonso Schomburg. Indeed their life stories do seem similar in certain respects. Whatever the case, Clarke scripted a life story that he narrated in many of his writings and speeches especially in the 1980s and 90s. According to this narrative, Clarke arrived from the hinterland to New York as a teenager, as did Schomburg. As boys, both were taunted by the allegation that African people had no history. Clarke like Schomburg got involved in the politics of nationalism and socialism as a young initiate into the big city. Clarke like Schomburg had little formal education. Just as Schomburg was converted to Pan African nationalism by an older self-educated mentor, so was Clarke. Clarke also followed Schomburg in appreciation and respect for the chain of champions of African humanity from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

Another significant parallel was that both were history advisors to perhaps the greatest leaders of mass movements of their respective times: Schomburg was an advisor to Marcus Garvey in the 1920s and John Clarke was an advisor to Malcolm X in the 1960s. (52) Both were not given full recognition by the university-trained scholars for much of their careers because they did not have college diplomas. Both also made ends meet much of their lives by taking employment in ordinary jobs allotted to persons of African descent. Their scholarly and activist productivity was nonetheless more abundant than most of their university-trained counterparts.

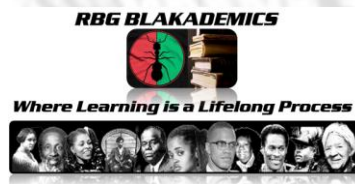
The parallels mentioned above are not intended to be complete but to demonstrate a significant aspect of John Henrik Clarke's historiography. What he so appropriately did was to place the historian in history. Dr. Clarke did not project Schomburg and himself into history in an egotistical or arrogant manner but in an informative and candid narrative that enables the scholars and students to understand the calling.

Schomburg led Professor Clarke to his second great teacher, Willis N. Huggins, who had received his Ph.D. the year before Clarke arrived in New York. (53) The relationship with Huggins began when Clarke started participating in the Harlem History Club along side Huggins's intellectual associate, John G. Jackson. Within the Harlem History Club Clarke's relationship with Jackson was probably more intimate than with Huggins whose professional, political, and international agendas spread him around considerably.

The history club, however, did meet on a regular bases every Sunday morning at the Harlem YMCA. The lectures and discussions seemed to be based on prior study and preparation. (54) Most of the sessions featured lectures by Dr. Huggins. In one of his autobiographical narratives, Clarke proclaimed that the Harlem History Club was his first university. (55)

Willis N. Huggins, the founder and director of the Harlem History Club, had arrived in New York in 1922 as an accomplished educator and journalist with considerable university training. A man in his mid thirties, he had taught in a historically black college, and a Chicago public high school and he had published two newspapers. (56) He made ends meet as a New York high school teacher. While teaching, he became involved in the Garvey movement and in Ethiopian and Haitian international politics. Most importantly, he joined the Pan African historiography projects with historians such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson. He also worked closely with Charles S. Johnson who later became the first black president of Fisk University. Huggins unlike most of the other university-trained scholars developed regular relationships with self-





taught scholars and seemed to have great appreciation and admiration for Arthur Schomburg. Schomburg had been a contributor to his newspaper and supported his efforts to persuade the public school system in New York to include Africana studies in the curriculum.

Huggins's relationship with John G. Jackson was also an atypical association. Jackson had arrived in New York from South Carolina in 1922 at the age of 15. Jackson finished high school in New York and attended classes at City College of New York, but he did not get a college diploma and thus was in effect a self-taught scholar. (57) The fact that Huggins selected his disciple as co-editor of a book that was basically Huggins's work is a demonstration that Huggins viewed the link between university-trained and self-taught scholars as vital.

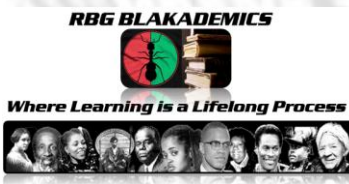
Soon after John Henrik Clarke joined the Harlem History Club, the Ethiopian crises began. Huggins, who had been associated with Ethiopian diplomats and representatives for several years, immediately got heavily involved in the campaign to prevent the colonization of one of only two independent Africana nations. (58) According to Professor Clarke's narrative, he and Jackson filled in as lecturers during the several months Huggins was absent at the outset of the crisis. Huggins not only became an organizer in behalf of beleaguered Ethiopia, he also went to Geneva to petition the League of Nations to prevent the Italian invasion and atrocities. (59) In other words, John Clarke began his Africa teaching career when he was barely twenty years old. The teaching responsibility within the study group was probably the basis for the beginning of a lifelong colleagueship and friendship between Clarke and Jackson. One aspect of the Huggins method of teaching was the presentation of historical dramas. These presentations required his students to research the lives of historical characters in African history, write up the relevant lives, and then play the part on stage before a community audience. Thus Clarke as a student participated in the development of research skills while at the same time teaching members of the Harlem community about the African past. (60)

Professor Clarke frequently wrote and said that Huggins taught him the political meaning of history. Indeed, he asserted that Huggins "was a master teacher and the first political analyst I had ever met." (61) In clarifying the essence of his instruction from Huggins, Clarke said:

He not only taught history in Sunday morning sessions; he taught the meaning of history especially as it relates to African people. He had a good and clear knowledge of European history and the mental notes I took in his class help me to this very day to look beyond Blackness and see Blackness more clearly. (62)

Huggins's influence on Clarke can be seen even more clearly when one compares Huggins's narrative of world history with that developed by Professor Clarke on the eve of his elevation to Presiding Elder of Africana Studies. (63) Although both Huggins and Clarke wrote under the title African history and/or civilization, they actually attempted a narrative on world history from an African perspective as Schomburg had insisted. The format for their story of the world began with a rationale for such an African reconstruction, not a revision but a correction of world history. For them the basic relevant facts of history were available but vital facts were hidden, obscured, or vastly mutilated.





In both cases the historical narrative proper begins with a review of the archaeological findings of researchers like the Leakeys who asserted that humanity originated in Africa and then spread throughout the world. Both scholars open history with the Nile Valley civilizations of Egypt and Ethiopia [Cush]. In the discussion of Nile Valley history, the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman cultures are woven into the narrative. The authors then turn to the role of Africans in the spread of Islam as the dominant force between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. Huggins in his work precedes the discussion of Islam with a relatively long exploration of the history of "Ethiopia since 330 A.D." with a focus on the crisis of 1935. Subsequently, Huggins and Clarke summarize the histories of South and West Africa. Huggins treats South Africa first while Clarke treats West Africa before South Africa. Both emphasize African resistance to European domination. In other words, Clarke follows the basic outline developed by Huggins. Clarke, however, significantly revised the data of history with more emphasis on the tradition of African warfare against enslavement and colonization. Clarke's endorsement of Huggins's approach is demonstrated by his encouragement of John G. Jackson, Huggins's disciple and assistant, in revising the Huggins-Jackson text thirty-five years later. (64)

Professor Clarke's association with his two great master teachers lasted only a few years, ending when they died, Schomburg in 1938 and Huggins in 1940. Their imprint on his thinking was basic to his development as a master teacher of Africana Studies. Both Schomburg and Huggins had been actively involved in promoting African studies during the period, which was dominated by Marcus Garvey and the "Harlem Renaissance." Through them and Jackson, Clarke learned about the projects and objectives of the Universal Negro Improvement Association under Garvey's direct leadership. He also learned about the teachings of the brilliant street orator and author Henry Hubert Harrison. (65) In other words, Clarke's educational foundations teachers had developed their projects while participating in the two movements that placed Harlem on the map of African history.

Less than a year after the disappearance and death of Huggins, John Henrik joined the United States Army. He remained in service more than four years, a period he characterized as wasted time. Before joining, he had launched a career in writing short stories and African oriented articles. From time to time, Clarke talked about his military experiences but such reflections add little to understanding his intellectual development and seemed to represent a detour in the road to destiny. Thus ended the first phase of his education.

THE CALLING

Sing me a song of two hundred million Africans
 Revising the spirit of Chaka, Mosesh and Menelik,
 And shouting to the world:
 "This is my land and I shall be free upon it!"
 Put some reason in my song and some madness too. (66)

The verse from a poem published in John Clarke's first book of poetry was published a few years after his discharge from the United States Army. The poem demonstrates Clarke's search for a calling. He was, in a way of speaking, at the crossroads trying to decide on a career as a literati or as a teacher of Africana Studies. In the meantime, the decade following his army service was





largely consumed trying to survive economically. Going from one menial job to the next, he found time to cultivate both tendencies. He forced himself into a significant role in the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, participating in its conferences and contributing to its Negro History Bulletin. (67) He pursued his other interest by becoming active in the Harlem Writers Guild. (68) During this period he also took advantage of the G.I. Bill by taking some courses at New York University. But he stopped far short of earning a degree.

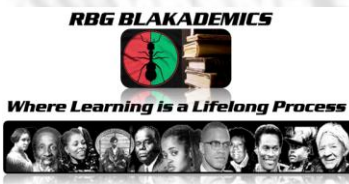
By 1956 Clarke's career path became a bit clearer. He began part-time teaching at the New School for Social Research where he began to assist in establishing African Studies. (69) This is the period when he got to know Leo Hansberry whom he brought to lecture at the New School. (70) Clarke often said that Hansberry taught him the philosophical meaning of history. The meaning of that attribution is obscure because Clarke gives virtually no explanation. Clarke was perhaps referring to the high quality of Hansberry's critique of Eurocentric African historiography. Hansberry also emphasized the use of primary sources as much as possible. Certainly Clarke's association with Hansberry in the late 1950s added to Clarke's understanding of ancient Nile Valley and Ethiopian history as well as the West African Kingdoms of the eleventh through sixteenth century. Hansberry's accomplishment in pioneering the teaching of courses in African civilization at Howard University starting in 1922 was a great demonstration of commitment to the establishment of Africana Studies. Hansberry's mission succeeded in the face of hostility not only from the white defenders of Western civilization but also from powerful black members of the faculty and administration at the University. (71)

In the fall of 1957, John Henrik Clarke expanded his teaching about Africa by launching a series of articles in the Pittsburgh Courier on "Lives of Great African Chiefs." The texts were originally intended as a book, which evidently was never published. (72) These biographical sketches were probably based on research that Clarke started under the tutelage of Dr. Huggins, and he may have benefited from the lectures of Hansberry. Whatever the case, they may be considered as a self-taught version of a graduate thesis.

At this point Dr. Clarke was ready for his field study in Africa. He had managed to save enough money to travel to the Continent for a several months study tour. While in Africa during the summer of 1958, he was based in Ghana where he again met the then prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah. He had first met Nkrumah as a student named Francis Nkrumah who occasionally dropped in on the meetings of the Harlem History Club. The prime minister gave him a job, which made his life a bit more comfortable.

During his stay in Ghana, Clarke stayed with a family in the community because he believed that one couldn't understand a people without having lived among them. He was able to observe community traditions that provided insight into indigenous African culture. He also had conversations with members of the leadership group and its opposition, which gave him insight into the emerging problems in independent Africa. His critical eye enabled him to reflect, "I could see right there where Ghana was going wrong by trying to develop an African Society without paying much attention to African traditionalism." (73) His critique became a basic part of his appraisal of African politics from that time until he died. Such evaluation had probably developed during his early study under Schomburg and was later reinforced by Hansberry who advocated the revival of African traditions.





While in Ghana, on that first trip, Clarke traveled from Accra, Ghana to Lagos, Nigeria by bus. At that time, its colonial overlords, the British, were preparing Nigeria for independence. Clarke discerned another major flaw in the so-called decolonization movement: the imposition of the nation-state format by combining incompatible ethnic groups in one state, thus encouraging conflict and paving the way for debilitating civil war within the newly independent nation.

During his travels, Professor Clarke met with Caribbean intellectuals as well as U.S. expatriates in London and several francophone Africans in Paris. One of the latter was Alioune Diop, editor of *Presence Africaine*, who began to publish articles by Clarke. In short, Clarke became a member of the international African intellectual elite and began to attend various conferences and congresses related to African culture, history, and scholarship. During this period, Dr. Clarke's international prestige was greater than was his U.S. recognition.

THE CURRICULUM OF JOHN HENRIK CLARKE

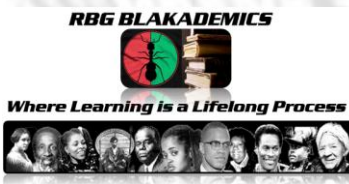
I refer to returning to New York as "My home in Exile" because my historical home is Africa. (74)

When professor Clarke returned from his journey to Africa in the fall of 1958, he began to publish articles reflecting his experiences on the Continent and his contacts in Paris. These articles appeared in *Presence Africaine*; the *Negro History Bulletin*; the *Journal of Negro Education*; and *Phylon* among others. In 1961 he began an affiliation with the journal *Freedomways* where he soon became an associate editor. His articles and book reviews continued to appear in *Freedomways* until 1986. In the meantime the increase in Africana oriented journals provided many opportunities for publication of his work which he took advantage of. He became one of the most prolific contributors to Africana thought.

In one of the early *Freedomways* articles, Dr. Clarke identifies an emerging "Afro-American Nationalism" that had a tremendous impact on the revolt of African descent students during the decade of the 60s. (75) Dr. Clarke begins the article with a focus on the demonstration against the U.S. involvement in the murder of Patrice Lumumba. The protest resulted in what is called a "riot" in the United Nations gallery. The fact that the incident occurred a year after the black student sit-in movement began is significant, although Dr Clarke did not focus on that event. Another article in the same issue did discuss the student movement. (76) Although the connection between the "New Afro-American Nationalism" and the student protest movement was not necessarily apparent at that time (1961), the two forces were to meet and partially merge in the late 1960s in the student led Black Studies Revolution.

Indeed the new nationalism contained the components that became the focus of the student movement. One component was the rejection of the old "Negro leadership Class." With the rise of SNCC and CORE, the NAACP and Urban League became less and less relevant. Another vital aspect of the new nationalism was what Clarke referred to as its "aroused proletarian" base; that is, its black community connection. This component, incorporated into the student demands for Black Studies, was quite a revolutionary thrust vis-a-vis the university curriculum. In other words, the students integrated the black community revolt into its movement. Another element in the new nationalism identified by Clarke was the African connection. According to him, Africa





had become "the magic word and the new hope" for large numbers of ordinary African descent persons. (77)

Another element, which Clarke pointed out, was the separation of this new nationalism from communist leadership. Although the economic agenda was proclaimed as socialism, it was an African socialism, which was based on African tradition rather than Marxist theory. (78) These tendencies were found not only in the growth of the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X's leadership role but in several Harlem based groups that were not religious based and that emphasized African culture. In recognizing and heralding this growing sense of Pan African nationalism, John Henrik Clarke had well prepared himself for leadership of the Black Studies Revolution, while the other mostly university-trained scholars were trying to figure how to respond to the unconventional demands of the students. Clarke succinctly summed up the spirit of this new nationalism which was in fact merely a revision of the earlier Pan African/African nationalism that nourished him in the early years of his instruction by Schomburg and Huggins. Professor Clarke's summary:

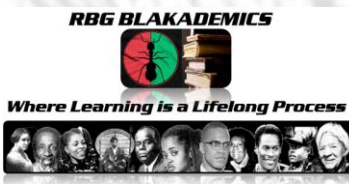
The new Afro-American nationalists ... have learned a lesson and discovered a great truth that still eludes the "Negro leadership class".... They have learned the value of history and culture as an instrument in stimulating the spiritual rebirth of a people. The cultural heritage of a people is directly related to their history. There can be no true understanding of the people of African origin in the United States until there is a better understanding, and more respect for, their African background. A people must take pride in their history and love their own memories in order to fulfill themselves. (79)

The article on nationalism was the possible source of two somewhat opposite criticisms of Clarke's position. On the one hand, Harold Cruse took him to task for siding with the Marxists against nationalism. Cruse implied that Clarke's argument was not sincere since a few years later he joined with communists in their attack on certain black intellectuals. What seems to have really bothered Cruse about Clarke's position was his (Clarke's) advocacy for the revival of African traditional culture. Cruse argued instead:

... The assertion of the Afro-American's cultural heritage in America cannot be based solely on an African cultural fundamentalism of the traditional kind. Even Africa herself is emerging out of such traditionalism toward something newer and more modern. (80)

On the other hand, Clarke felt the position he took on the Pan African nationalism versus communism conflict was responsible for an attack that caused him to suffer a stroke. (81) Clarke had been accused of collaborating with the CIA in a communist newspaper article in 1982. In his dispute with the communists, the editors of Freedomways sided with his accusers. Professor Clarke argued that the basis of his problem with the Marxists was his commitment to Pan African nationalism and socialism. Clarke asserted that he was a believer in both and saw no contradiction. He insisted however that African socialism did not result from Marxism. Ironically both Cruse's criticism and the communists's accusation demonstrated the success that Clarke had





achieved in the Pan African nationalism movement. The criticisms and accusations however did not seem to resonate among the masses of Clarke's followers.

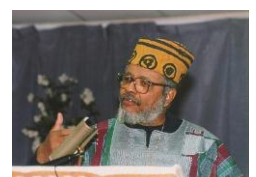
John Clarke's position with Freedomways enabled him to edit an anthology on Harlem writers that underwent several revisions from 1964 through 1971. (82) The volume contained essays on politics, nationalism, sociology, the arts, and culture. Harlem USA also contained a selection of poems and short stories from leading literati, some of whom had been significant contributors to the "Harlem Renaissance." The work was advertised as "the most comprehensive Harlem anthology ever published." (83) The project marked the beginning of a series of volumes edited by Dr. Clarke, which included books on Malcolm X, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Paul Robeson. These collections became basic textbooks for the emerging Africana Studies curriculum.

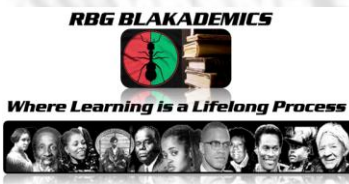
In the meantime, the Black Student Revolt had grown to such an extent that the 1960s in the United States may justifiably be named the Decade of the Black Student. The movement, which eventually caused the collapse of the de facto segregation system in the southern U.S. began as an attack on segregation in places of public accommodation and quickly spread to challenge the widespread political disenfranchisement of black people. The revolt, which was started by students of "Historically Black Colleges and Universities," included an attack on the administrations of the colleges from which they marched. The Negro administrators in loyalty to their appointed roles as pacifiers of the brightest among the blacks tried to stop the protests. One result of the student revolt was the decision by most universities in the non-southern part of the country to recruit a significantly larger number of black students to add to the tokens they traditionally enrolled.

When the students arrived at the great institutions of higher learning, they quickly found a challenge that was worse than the segregated Negro colleges they left. The curriculum of white supremacy was devastating, and so the most courageous black students began to demand Black Studies to protect themselves from the humiliation of the mainstream liberal arts course of study. This insurrection radicalized some of the black faculty who had been hired by the universities to help pacify the students. Therefore, the attack against the curriculum quickly spread to the national academic disciplines that determine what is taught and by whom. One of the most significant disciplinary confrontations was led by Dr. Clarke against the Association of African Studies starting in 1968. (84)

The objectives of AHSA, which was organized following the confrontation of ASA by scholars and students, reflected the philosophy that Professor Clarke had developed over the thirty-five years following the beginning of his tutelage under Schomburg and Huggins in the "University of Harlem." The objectives started by emphasizing the development of "African history and cultural courses along Afro-centric lines." (85) The objectives covered educational, international, domestic, and black community agendas. The concluding statement summarized the vision of African Studies that reflected the striving of the intergenerational chain of champions of African history from the time of John Edward Bruce through Arthur A. Schomburg to John Henrik Clarke who extended the project into the Black Studies Revolution. The project summary:

In the new interest in Pan-Africanism that is gaining momentum





throughout the African world, the intent of the Africans is not only to change their definition in world history but also to change their direction. There is a hope that Pan-Africanism will spread beyond its narrow intellectual base to become the motivation for an African World Union. This will begin when we recognize that we are not "colored," "Negro," or "black." We are an African people wherever we are on the face of the earth. (86)

* Jacob H. Carruthers is recently deceased.

(1) Locksley Edmondson, introducing Professor Clarke at the last of three lectures celebrating the 20th anniversary of Cornell University's Africana Studies Center, John Henrik Clarke My Life in Search of Africa, 1994, first published by Cornell University African Studies and Research Center Monograph Series No. 8, 86.

(2) John Henrik Clarke, My Life in Search of Africa, 33 and 34; John Henrik Clarke Africans at the Crossroads: Notes of an African World Revolution (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1991), 347, 410-412.

(3) James Turner introducing the second lecture in the Africana Studies 20th Anniversary Celebration, 1994. Clarke, My Life in Search of Africa, 41.

(4) Ibid., 42.

(5) Henry Louis Gates, "Black Demagogues and Pseudo-Scholars" New York Times July 20, 1992 Op-Ed page.

(6) Harold Cruise, The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: From its Origins to the Present (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc, 1967), 338.

(7) Earl E. Thorpe, Black Historians: A Critique (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc. 1971), 143-44. Dr. Thorpe discusses the concept although Clarke is not included among those so classified. Later Thorpe mentions "the youngest group of historians" where he does include "John Henrik Clarke ... an able writer and lecturer on both African and Afro-American history" 187; James Turner in his introduction of Professor Clarke's lecture at Cornell classifies him among the "scholars without portfolio." Clarke, My Life in Search of Africa, 42.

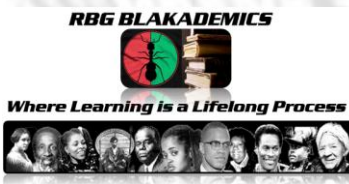
(8) Professor Clarke used those terms in reflecting on his life in "John Henrik Clarke, On My Journey Now". The Journal of Pan African Studies, Special Issue, 125-223, 137.

(9) Jacob H. Carruthers, Intellectual Warfare (Chicago: Third World Press, 1999), 161. See citation for a brief summary with references to sources.

(10) Ibid., Intellectual Warfare, 27-28.

(11) This fact is frequently emphasized by Yosef ben-Jochannan in public lectures as well as private conversations.





(12) David Walker, *Walker's Appeal* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1993), 76-83.

(13) Maria W. Stewart, *America's First Black Woman Political Writer: Essays and Speeches*. Edited and introduced by Marilyn Richardson (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 30, 40; Henry Highland Garnet, *Walker's Appeal*, with a brief sketch of His Life and Garnet's Address to the Slaves of the United States of America (New York: J. H. Tobitt, 1848; republished with an introduction by William Loren Katz, 2002 (North Stratford, New Hampshire: Ayer Company Publishers), v-vii.

(14) Arthur A. Schomburg, *Racial Integrity: A Plea for the Establishment of a Chair of Negro History in our Schools and Colleges*, 1913 Yonkers. Negro Society for Historical Research Occasional Papers No. 3., Excerpt in John Bracey, Jr. August Meier and Elliot Rudwick (eds). *Black Nationalism in America*, 310 regarding Crummel; Arthur A. Schomburg "The Negro Digs up his Past" Alain Locke (ed) *The New Negro; Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1992) 235 on Crummell, 236 on Bruce.

(15) John Henrik Clarke "The Influence of Arthur A. Schomburg on my Concept of Africana Studies." *Pylon*, no.49:1-2, (1992); a significant part of this study will deal with the Schomburg Clarke relationship.

(16) Africana Studies is the term preferred by Professor Clarke as the name of the discipline which emerged as Black Studies and which sometimes is called Afro-American or African American Studies. Clarke chose the name Africana Studies because it "embraces all Africans." Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 36.

(17) Barbara Eleanor Adams, ed. John Henrik Clarke: *The Early Years* (Hampton: United Brothers and Sisters Communication), 1992. This work will be cited below as John Henrik Clarke *The Early Years*. The major part of the publication is a transcription of an oral autobiography by Professor Clarke; a second autobiographical sketch is found in Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*; the third is Clarke, *On My Journey Now*.

(18) John Clarke explained that he was named John Henry Clarke and changed the Henry to Henrik after arriving in New York. He legalized the change when he joined the Army in 1941. Adams, ed., *The Early Years*.

(19) Clarke, *On My Journey Now*, 130

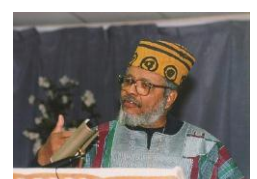
(20) Clarke, John Henrik Clarke: *My Life in Search of Africa*, 6.

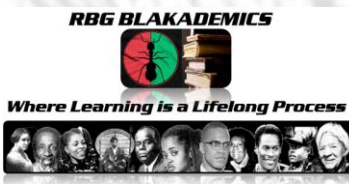
(21) Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 11

(22) Clarke, "The Influence," 5.

(23) Clarke, *On My Journey Now*, 130.

(24) Ibid.





(25) Adams, ed., *The Early Years* 21-25.

(26) Clarke, *African People in World History* (Baltimore: Black Classics Press, 1993), 5. Similar statements can be found throughout his works.

(27) Adams, ed., *The Early Years*, 29.

(28) *Ibid.*, 28; Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 13-14; Clarke, *Africans at the Crossroads*, 29; the various texts.

(29) Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 13-14.

(30) Adams, ed., *The early Years*, 28.

(31) *Ibid.*, *The Early Years*, 31, emphasis added.

(32) John Henrik Clarke, "The Influence," 4.

(33) Jesse Hoffffnung-Garsbof, "The Migrations of Arthur Schomburg: On Being Antillano, Negro, and Puerto Rican in New York 1891-1938," *Journal of Ethnic History* no. 21:1 (Fall 2001), 3-49. I would like to thank Dr. Ralph Crowder for pointing me to this informative article. The spelling of Schomburg's first name in Spanish is Arturo.

(34) Hoffnung-Garsbof "The Migration of Arturo Schomburg."

(35) John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, eds., *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), 299.

(36) Willis N. Huggins, Ph.D. and John G. Jackson, *An Introduction to African Civilization with main Currents in Ethiopian History* (New York: Avon House, 1937), 9; and Arthur A. Schomburg "The Negro Digs up his Past" in Alain Locke, ed. *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 236.

(37) Clarke, "The Influence," 4.

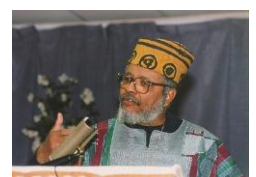
(38) Arthur A. Schomburg, "Racial Integrity: A Plea for the Establishment of a Chair of Negro History in Our Schools and Colleges," excerpt in John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, eds., *Black Nationalism in America*, 304.

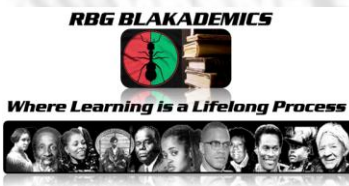
(39) *Ibid.*

(40) Schomburg, "The Negro Digs up his Past," 231.

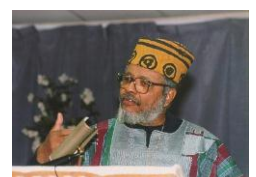
(41) Schomburg, "Racial Integrity," 306.

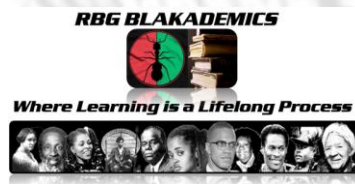
(42) *Ibid.*





- (43) Schomburg, "Racial Integrity," 306.
- (44) Schomburg, "The Negro Digs up his Past," 233.
- (45) Schomburg, "Race Integrity," 205.
- (46) Hoffnung-Garskoff, "The Migrations," 33.
- (47) Ibid., "The Migrations," 34.
- (48) W.E.B. Du Bois and Guy Johnson, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Negro: Preparatory Volume*.
- (49) Clarke, "The Influence," 5.
- (50) Ibid., 9.
- (51) Ibid., 4.
- (52) Hoffnung-Garskof, "The Migrations" 23; Clarke, "On My Journey Now," 140.
- (53) Clarke, "The Influence," 8; Ralph L. Crowder, "Willis Nathaniel Huggins (1886-1941): Historian, Activist and Community Mentor," unpublished, 2003.
- (54) Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 18.
- (55) Clarke, *On My Journey Now*, 132.
- (56) Willis N. Huggins and John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations* (New York: Avon House, 1937), 13. This work contains considerable autobiographical data related to Dr. Huggins's many interests; Ralph L. Crowder, "Willis Nathaniel Huggins," 3-6.
- (57) Madalyn O'Hair, "Introduction," in John G. Jackson, *Ages of Gold and Silver* (Austin: American Atheist Press, 1990), vii. Ms. O'Hair mistakenly records the date of Professor Jackson's arrival in New York as 1932. The information that I have from personal conversations with Mr. Jackson indicates the date should be 1922.
- (58) The other independent black nation was Haiti. Huggins evidently did not consider Liberia an "independent" nation. Huggins's subtle assessment of the Liberian situation can be found in Huggins and Jackson, *An Introduction to African Civilization*, 129-131. Haiti of course had regained its independence after several years of U.S. occupancy.
- (59) Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 18.
- (60) Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 23.
- (61) Clarke, "The Influence," 7.





(62) Ibid.

(63) The comparison uses the historical material and its presentation in Huggins and Jackson, *An Introduction to African Civilizations* and John Henrik Clarke "A New Approach to African History," unpublished speech delivered at the Regional Conference on Afro-American History, 1967. Schomburg Vertical file. I would like to thank Michael M. Roundette, Senior Librarian, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. Huggins's narrative seems to have been a revision of George Washington Williams's *History of the Negro Race in America* (New York: Arno Press, 1968) originally published by Pullman Sons in 1883 and W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Negro* (New York: Holt Publishing Co., 1915).

(64) John G. Jackson, *Introduction to African Civilizations* (Secaucus, New Jersey: The Citadel Press, 1974).

Clarke also secured a publisher and wrote an "Introduction" and a "New Bibliographical Approach to African History" with a "Selected Bibliography of New Books Reflecting a New Approach to African History."

(65) Clarke, *Africans at the Crossroads*, 37.

(66) John Henrik Clarke, "Sing me a New Song" in John Henrik Clarke, *Harlem USA* (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 289. The poem was originally published in John Henrik Clarke's *Rebellion in Rhyme* (Prince City: Decker, 1948).

(67) Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 24.

(68) Adams, ed., *The Early Years*.

(69) Ibid., 50.

(70) Ibid. See Joseph E. Harris, "William Leo Hansberry 1894-1965. "Profile of a Pioneer Africanist" in Joseph E. Harris, ed., *Pillars in Ethiopian History: The William Leo Hansberry African History Notebook*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974), 18.

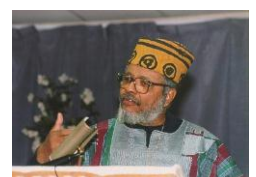
(71) Joseph Harris provides a summary of Hansberry's struggles in Joseph E. Harris, "William Leo Hansberry, 1894-1965: A profile of a Pioneer Africanist," 3-30.

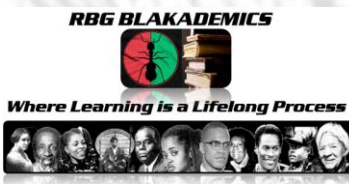
(72) A relatively complete bibliography of works by Dr. Clarke can be found in John Henrik Clarke, *On My Journey Now*, 224-257.

(73) Adams, ed., *The Early Years*, 52.

(74) Adams, ed., *The Early Years*, 61.

(75) Clarke, "The New Afro-American Nationalism," *Freedomways*, no. 1:4 (Fall 1961): 285-295.





(76) Lester Davis, "NAACP: A Leadership Dilemma," *Freedomways*, no. 1:4 (Fall 1961): 275-281.

(77) Clarke, "The New Afro-American Nationalism," 293.

(78) *Ibid.*, 294.

(79) Clarke, "The New Afro-American Nationalism," 292.

(80) Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 343. Cruse argues for the priority of a Negro American culture that has little to do with Africa.

(81) Clarke, *On My Journey Now*, 135-136.

(82) See the publication information in John Henrik Clarke, ed., *Harlem USA* (New York: Collier Books, 1970).

(83) The jacket of John Henrik Clarke, ed., *Harlem USA*.

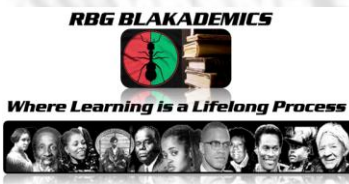
(84) Clarke, *My Life in Search of Africa*, 33, 34; Clarke, *Africans at the Crossroads*, 410-412; Maulana Karenga, *Introduction to Black Studies*, second edition (Los Angeles: The University of Sankore Press, 1993), 28-31.

(85) Clarke, *Africans at the Crossroads*, 410.

(86) *Ibid.*, 412.

Jacob H. Carruthers*





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